

# HUMANITIES

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NETWORK

## Reflections on the Valley

by  
Richard Rodriguez

*Editor's Note: The following remarks by Richard Rodriguez, a native of Sacramento and author of *Hunger* and *Memory*, were part of a roundtable discussion entitled "The Arts: Cultural Identity Within the Central Valley," one of several topics at the day-long symposium sponsored by the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, last October. The symposium, *The Great Central Valley: Heartland in Transition*, explored topics of historical and current interest related to the Valley: the first inhabitants, the development of agriculture, the controversy over water, and the future of the Valley.*

I come here as a writer, but also as a man who was once a boy who grew up in Sacramento, and who regards being here today with some irony—being in San Francisco talking about the Valley. I grew up in Sacramento and hated Sacramento and loved San Francisco and ran to this city whenever I accumulated \$10 for the round-trip Greyhound bus trip. What I loved about San Francisco was that it was not the Valley. What I distrust about this city now is exactly that same thing. You go to a city like Dallas, and you see men who work in the fields, and you see men who have made money from the fields. You go to a city like San Francisco, and it denies its connection to the land, to the Valley.

There was always something touching to me in the early photographs of San Francisco, those gray photographs of the City just being built in the nineteenth century, the houses clustered so tight next to each other, as if in defiance against the land, the space, the vastness of the west.

When I came to San Francisco, I always wore a suit. I was a boy who loved cities. I wanted to live in Paris; I thought I wanted to live in New York; I settled for wanting to live in San Francisco. I was a boy in love with the illusions of buildings, their permanence, the possibility of man creating something that will last generation after generation, a boy being able to see what the old men, now dead, had built. I was a boy in love with the idea of art, with the idea of books, of writing something to endure on the shelf, of remaining. The Valley was none of this. There was only Sutter's Fort, which by the time I knew it was prettified to something so fake in its preciseness and its well-mannered lawns that I never believed it was connected to anything old.

I was a boy who wanted to be a writer and who dreamed of eighteenth century Paris and nineteenth century New York. I remember though when I was about 12 years old, coming across two Valley writers. One was William Saroyan writing about Fresno, curiously enough writing about drinking water in Fresno. And it occurred to me suddenly, for the first time, that this was the stuff of writing, that there was literary material out there in the Valley. I remember reading an early essay by Joan Didion in *Holiday* magazine about her own ances-

tors, the old ladies on the lawn swings and the veranda of the Senator Hotel. And that too was surprising. Saroyan and Didion came from very different parts of the Valley, with very different memories. To this Mexican-American boy they were deeply influential and suggestive.

As a child I had almost no sense of winter in the Valley, or of the fog, partly perhaps because we lived in the city, partly because there was that overwhelming other memory of summer, the summer which would begin in early May and would continue into September. Childhood is a season of summer; it is a season of being out of school, of being under that sun, of going slow, feeling the heat push up the pavement into one's rubber-soled shoes. Summer, that eternal summer of Sacramento, was my season of Sacramento.

We were of the city. My parents, both of them newly arrived immigrants from Mexico, had ambitions for



Modesto Sign. From the Great Central Valley Project. Photo: Robert Dawson

middle class life. My mother was a typist; my father made false teeth. They remembered Mexico as a village, and they had moved from that village into a city—a city of buses, a city of neon, a city of ambition. My father dreamed of the sea; my mother feared my dark skin. "Stay out of the sun or you will end up looking like a farm worker." She feared as many other Mexican mothers do, the meaning of the dark skin, the toughened skin, the burden of the sun. I can remember the boy in the back seat of the Chevy driving down the highway toward San Francisco, my family around me, the boy peering out of the windows and seeing the neat, even line of the horizon broken by the brown figures of men bent over, bent over the land.

I can remember those men coming into town at Penney's on Saturday mornings, buying whatever they were buying—the young faces, the old hands. Sacramento had no monuments; it had no durability, and those men

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I remember when I was about 16 years old I was working for Hobrecht Lighting Company, and I delivered light fixtures at a time when Sacramento was suddenly spilling over the banks of the Sacramento and the American Rivers, was moving north and south dramatically, uneventfully, in suburban sprawl. I used to deliver light fixtures in big boxes to new homes with four bedrooms and two and a half bathrooms. I remember once driving up toward Auburn and waiting for the owner of the house to come with the key. I was standing in his yet-ungroomed backyard, a backyard without a fence. And here on a winter afternoon—it was then about early March—I heard the wind blow, whistle, and I regretted for the first time in my life the idea that this would all go, that it was leaving, that the houses were gathering close together as in San Francisco, and the wind would not whistle.

I left Sacramento at about the time when United Airlines had a non-stop flight to New York. There was once a time in my life when I would have seen that as an enormous salvation. In fact, I used to go out to the airport and watch planes come and go. And then I left.

A few weeks ago I was visiting some editors at *California Magazine* in Los Angeles, and I suggested to them, I pleaded with them that they have an issue dedicated to the Valley. The head editor is from New York; the other editor is from Rhode Island. They are still insecure in their knowledge of California, and they keep thinking that you are talking San Fernando. It is worse when you get to New York. They do not even know San Fernando.

Wanting to talk about the Valley, wanting to write, wanting to remember it. There was a time when I wanted to write about Paris or thought I did, wanted to write about big cities and their old buildings. But I find myself middle-aged now. And I think that art has less to do with monuments than it has to do with desire, that art has less to do with permanence than it has to do with the striving, the molding of clay, the shaping of plants toward the sky, regardless of whether the seasons change, regardless of whether winter comes.

On Thursday this week I was in Newman, California at a funeral for the mother of a close friend of mine. We were in Newman, a small town I don't know very well, a beautiful little town along Highway 5. And it occurred to me for the first time as I watched her coffin lowered into the ground, the crucifix on it, and some nuns nearby singing in Spanish, it occurred to me that I too would like to be buried in the Valley.



# Reaching New Student Populations Through the Humanities

by  
Barbara Mertes

Over the next few years, California's Community Colleges will be initiating important changes in the delivery of instructional and student service programs. These changes will be driven by the colleges' growing sensitivity to serve the state's new student populations.

Perhaps the most important recommendation published in the 1986 Joint Committee for Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education Report on Community Colleges is the one which reaffirms the college's maintenance of an open admissions policy for all students who can profit from instruction. The Joint Committee directs further that community colleges vigorously recruit students from underrepresented groups and that all colleges review their policies as these relate to affirmative action. In addition, the Joint Committee recommends that all students be afforded the opportunity to study in an educational environment which guarantees quality and promotes student success. Each community college will be held accountable for meeting high standards of performance as outlined in AB 1725, a bill authored by members of the Joint Legislative Committee who reviewed the Master Plan Study.

As community college faculty and administrators continue to appraise their institutions' mission, goals, and priorities, it is my belief that greater emphasis will be placed on the integration of selected aspects of the humanities within the college's other instructional areas, especially in technical-occupational education.

This integration has already occurred with the restructuring of curriculum within the nation's leading professional graduate schools, particularly those granting MBA degrees. This quiet revolution has signaled other institutions of higher learning to begin a re-examination of their mission as it addresses human values and moral ethics.

Bombarded with high technology and infused with a growing disenchantment with current leadership models, today's community college students search for an intellectual and spiritual reinforcement which supercedes the traditional transmission of information.

With the reaffirmation of its major mission, California's Community Colleges will continue to lead the state by enrolling the largest number of students entering higher education. No other California institution of higher learning matches in enrollment numbers the one million plus students who, each year, attend community colleges; no other institution of higher learning faces the similar challenge of handling wide population diversity or assumes the magnitude of responsibility in buffering the culture shock experienced by California's newest populations. Perhaps those principles most often found in the teaching of the humanities will provide reasonable guidelines by which community college faculty will be able to meet the prescribed compliances of reform and revision.

Typically, tenets found in the broad humanities curriculum introduce students to fundamental processes which involve critical thinking and analysis and decision-making; it includes instruction in such basic skills as oral and written discourse and learning. Because the studies in humanities are often presented through an interdisciplinary approach, students benefit from opportunities to assimilate a wide variety of ideas, philosophies, and artistic achievement. This approach, because it encompasses a cross-cultural study of the world's great thinkers, writers, and artists, enhances students' understanding and appreciation of a world that extends beyond their parochial reference. As a result, students develop a tolerance for handling conflicting ideas and a flexibility for considering options in the decision-making process.



Barbara Mertes of South County Community College District has coordinated two CCH-funded drama/discussion projects for community college audiences.

The teaching of the humanities in California's Community Colleges has definite benefits in addressing the reaffirmation of the mission statement. Because community colleges are charged with the responsibility of educating all students who can profit from instruction, study of the humanities provides an intellectual vehicle by which faculty can touch the psyche of a diverse student population. These principles are expressed through the humanities' ability to reach and excite students of all ages, to provide a successful enculturation process for the colleges' newest populations, to promote the preservation of American values and culture, to supply students with a plethora of exemplary role models, to incite discussions related to ethics and moral behavior, to give students opportunities for the expression of creative and artistic talents, and to broaden students' reference to cultures and ideas not usually found in their frame of reference.

With the continual graying of California's population, a larger proportion of older individuals will be seeking opportunities to enrich their lives and to stimulate their thinking. Because of their accessibility to the general populace, community colleges will continue to enroll increasing numbers of mature adults who will now have the leisure "to read that book" or "paint that picture" or "write that poem." It is from this group of students that the arts will find new and enthusiastic support.

The steady growth of populations from foreign cultures is noted in the state's demographic statistics. The humanities can provide a strong vehicle for the enculturation process of these students. American theater, literature, art, and music encapsulate American values and culture and provide sensitive mechanisms of perception and intellectual meaning with which individuals can assimilate a reasonable appraisal of their new environment.

Because American values and culture are often in conflict, community college students have the opportunity to develop skills which will allow them to make reliable judgments and to arrive at prudent decisions. The current exemplary project related to the celebration of the United States Constitution's Bicentennial, *A More Perfect Union*, provides an excellent example of the use of the humanities. Supported by the California Council for the Humanities and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, this theatrical production will

reach 21 California Community Colleges during the 1987-88 Academic Year.

A second project funded by the California Council for the Humanities, *Norman Rockwell: Growing Up In America*, will tour seven community colleges in the Fall of 1987. This production presents the life history of American illustrator Norman Rockwell and discusses how his works relate to American tradition and culture.

A special commendation is extended to Constance Carroll, who serves as chairman of the California Council for the Humanities and President of Saddleback Community College, for her leadership in bringing these two important humanities projects to California's Community Colleges.

Most recently, the identification of exemplary leadership models has become obscured. Actions and behaviors of national and state governmental leaders, political figures, and representatives from the arts, religion, and even professional athletics, have failed to inculcate inspiration or respect from the American public. In many cases, expediency rather than morality has directed the actions of these individuals and has caused a deterioration in the public's positive perception of the worth and integrity of its leaders. While study in the humanities rarely compensates for the effects of miscreant behavior, it does provide guidelines by which one can improve or change his/her own value system.

Discussions dealing with ethics and morality cross all instructional areas, providing valuable insights for students who are working or preparing to work. Personnel officers from business, government, and industry universally suggest that the teaching of ethics is the single most important lesson which community colleges can provide students. In addition to preparation for a successful career in the workplace, students use a code of ethics in their personal relationships and in their reaction to social injustices. It is that element which causes individuals to move from observer to participant, from indifference to commitment.

If properly presented, the humanities serve as a deterrent to ethical illiteracy, a type of illiteracy equally as debilitating as those described in more common solecistic conditions.

The study of humanities provides opportunities for students to present, emulate, and interpret great works, and thus, perpetuate expectations of high standards of artistic and intellectual achievement within society. The humanities provide opportunities for students to develop vision and imagination and give them a refreshing juxtaposition to the more technical and prescribed courses of study.

The study of humanities diminishes parochialism and becomes the vehicle by which students become "international" in their cultural tastes. With this more sophisticated understanding, individuals are encouraged to become more cosmopolitan in their thinking and more sensitive to the values shared in other societies.

Humanizing diverse populations represents a major contribution which California's Community Colleges can offer students. With this process comes a revitalization of teaching and rededication to a way of life that reaches beyond the confines of the classroom. These are the lessons upon which one fashions a perpetual respect for the dignity of all living things and for their contributions to social and moral order.

*Barbara Mertes is Dean of Institutional Planning, Development, and Community Relations at South County Community College District, Hayward. In addition to coordinating the community college tour for "A More Perfect Union," Dr. Mertes is the project director for another CCH-funded project, Norman Rockwell: Growing Up in America, which will tour seven community colleges in the fall of 1987.*



# Systems in Conflict: Myth, Family and Industrial Society

by  
Maria Herrera-Sobek

*Editor's Note: The 1987 Hispanic Playwrights Project sponsored by the South Coast Repertory, Costa Mesa, presented a week of workshops, readings and seminars on July 6 through 12. One of the works-in-progress that received a public reading was "Blacklight" by Estela Portillo Trambley, one of the foremost contemporary Hispanic writers, having distinguished herself as a poet and short story writer as well as a playwright. The following essay about "Blacklight" was included in the playbill for the performance.*

Estela Portillo Trambley's play *Blacklight* has a tripartite structure through which the main action evolves. The three principal components structuring the drama and resonating throughout its framework are myth, family, and industrial society. In *Blacklight* Mayan Gods appear as important structural elements in the drama. The Mayan myths extant in the play are not only religious symbols reminding humanity of an ancient, sacred past and humankind's relationship and obligations to this *illo tempore* but are metaphoric entities representing nature. The persistent blowing of the wind, the incessant pounding of the rays of the hot desert sun, the cool, soothing rain are concretely involved in nudging mankind's memory toward its sacred duty to nature and its obligation not to desecrate it.

Humanity must obey the primordial instincts of survival inherited from prehistoric times or all will be doomed, will perish in a manmade holocaust. Nature will extract the price from man for his disobedience and the price will be high—death.

Both myth and nature exhibit a circular structure: the myth of the eternal return is inscribed in the daily rising of the sun, in the cyclical nature of the seasons, in the journey of the earth around the great incandescent star—the sun, in the biological rhythm of life and death. Thus life and death are inexorably linked in an ironclad embrace.

Mythic space and time together with Nature's assertive presence envelops the lives of the characters. The family, long detached from the ancient moorings of its Mayan past, is slowly disintegrating, crumbling, like the Mayan temples and pyramids in Southern Mexico in the Yucatan area. The family has neglected and abandoned its gods, its myths, i.e. its close ties with nature. The children have lost their connections to a sacred past that nourished and sustained their spirits. Foco, Cuauqui, Mundo, Chrom, Tato, and Nacho are left unmoored and lost in a fast-paced industrialized society. They are the rejects, the misfits of an increasingly regimented and conformist society that demands total spiritual surrender to the new gods of technology and progress; to the "Iron man with iron faces and iron ways. Metal screaming No hope, No hope, No hope" as Nacho sadly realizes.

Unable to fit in with the new and having lost their mythic Mayan roots, the characters in the play seek to form new alliances. Thus the formation of the surrogate family—the gang. Stress, violence, lack of spirituality, and love lead them into the false gods of security, pseudo-peace and happiness—drugs, alcohol, sex. The family structure has been completely wrecked and decay, disintegration, despair, and failure run rampant. The family has failed to survive and to thrive unscarred in industrialized society and this turn of events can only lead to a tragic ending. The proud Children of the Sun rejected, stigmatized, mutilated, and brutalized be-

come alcoholics, drug addicts, wandering souls, and ultimately are lost forever in the grips of death.

The philosopher and myth scholar Mircea Eliade insists that a fundamental characteristic of traditional society is a "revolt against concrete, historical time, the nostalgia for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things, to the "Great Time." Both Mundo, one of the principal characters, and Nacho, his father, seek to connect to their mythic past. Nacho's deranged ramblings are symptomatic of a desire to return to a more humane and meaningful life. Likewise, Mundo's yearnings to return to a more meaningful existence are seen in his feeble attempts to construct a "mountain" in his room. The mountain according to myth scholars is symbolic of the "center"—it is the *axis mundi* of the universe. Thus through Mundo's (Mundo = World) name we can see his symbolic relationship to it. The mountain is seen as a mediatory force between hell, earth, and heaven, and is viewed as the earth's navel, i.e. where Creation began. Mundo will be "sacrificed" at the foot of this "mountain."

Industrialized society is perceived in the play as the primary culprit in instigating and forging the powerful forces that alienate humankind from its original mythic ties with the earth and nature; it is viewed as fomenting the fragmentation of the family into warring factions ready to kill and maim each other. Trambley's metaphor for industrial and technological progress is masterfully constructed in the metaphor of the train—the Iron Devil as it is denominated in the drama. Those not skillful at adapting to it are blown into a thousand pieces.

The Mexican American family depicted in the play lived by the railroad tracks. The decayed fruits of society are evident in the trash surrounding the dilapidated house which is likewise in various stages of disintegration. Objects and people are analogous to each other: they are the leftovers, the debris, the jetsam and flotsam of industrialized society.

The train, precisely on time each day, shrills its message as it passes Nacho's house; it is a superb metaphor for the inevitable, unrelenting force of civilization, of industrial progress. Embodied in the majestic, imposing presence and power of the Iron Horse is the realization that once civilization has unleashed this technological monstrosity it is unable to control it, to properly harness it, and ultimately lives are lost as it thunders toward the future. Technological progress parallels the myths of yore in demanding its quota of sacrificial victims.

However, although nature conceptualized through the Mythic Gods is portrayed as demanding of human blood, it is more forgiving than the new industrial gods. As representatives of nature and her unending cycles, the Mayan Gods demand a life but as their cyclical attributes prescribe, they also lavish the gift of life.

The concept of a Mayan universe with its conceptualization of cyclical time predominates the structure of the play. This is specifically evident in the play's finale where the mythic vision of a universe with a belief in its periodic regeneration of time is symbolically given with the birth of a new life—Ixchel's baby. Thus the cyclical concept of time is delineated in the triad: Creation—Destruction—New Creation.

The play ends on a positive note by reasserting the philosophical belief in an ever regenerating universe. Trambley furthermore gives a positive value to suffering and death: through death (sacrifice) the universe can revitalize itself and regenerate new life in an unending cycle. Thus suffering and death are given a meaningful framework through which they can be endured.



Playwright Estela Portillo Trambley's *Blacklight* was read as part of the Hispanic Playwright's Project at South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa.

## Ukiah Players Begin Community College Tour

In October the Ukiah Players began their tour of community college campuses in rural areas of the state, bringing their original play, "A More Perfect Union" to local audiences. Each performance of the play includes a post-play discussion with the audience. The discussion is led by a scholar from the host community college or from a nearby CSU campus. The "playbill" that is given to each member of the audience includes essays by three distinguished constitutional scholars together with a chronology of bicentennial dates and a selected bibliography.

The first two performances on the tour were very successful. Audiences at both locations testified to the "entertaining but informative" nature of the program. Check the tour schedule outlined below and plan to attend the performance in your area.

### Tour Schedule for "A More Perfect Union"

#### 1987

October 6	College of the Siskiyous, Weed
October 8	College of the Redwoods, Eureka

#### 1988

February 2	Butte College, Oroville
February 3	Sierra College, Rocklin
February 4	Yuba College, Marysville
February 5	Cosumnes River College, Placerville
February 6	Columbia College
February 8	San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton
February 9	Modesto Junior College
February 10	Merced College
February 11	Fresno City College
February 17	Kings River College, Reedley
February 18	College of the Sequoias, Visalia
February 19	Porterville College
February 22	Bakersfield College
February 23	Taft College
February 24	Santa Barbara City College
February 26	Monterey Peninsula College
February 29	Hartnell College, Salinas
March 2	Cabrillo College, Aptos
March 3	Chabot College, Hayward Chabot College, Livermore



# SEPTEMBER GRANT AWARDS

## Humanities for Californians

### Evolution of Black American Religious Music

*Sponsor: Young Saints Scholarship Foundation, Los Angeles*

*Project Director: Evelyn Roberts*

*Amount of Award: \$7,345*

This project will sponsor a one-day symposium at the California Afro-American Museum in Los Angeles on January 29, 1988. The symposium will feature two panels of scholars: a morning panel focused on the evolutionary roots of spirituals and gospel music, and an afternoon panel featuring case study examples of different arrangements and interpretation styles. Panelists will also discuss the social and political functions of Black religious music and its impact on family and community life.

### For the Record: Issues of Documentation and Contemporary Art

*Sponsor: San Diego State University Foundation and the Southern California Committee for Contemporary Art Documentation (SCCAD)*

*Project Director: Murney Gerlach*

*Amount of Award: \$7,500*

On March 26, 1988, a program of lectures, discussions and panels concerning issues relating to the preservation and documentation of contemporary art records will be presented at the Huntington Library. Humanities scholars, historians, librarians, artists, and archivists will explore the reasons why art in California—including artists' papers, slides, oral histories, films, videos, and folk art—should be preserved and why the general public could be concerned with preservation issues.

### Pre-Concert Discussion Series on Women Composers

*Sponsor: The Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, San Francisco*

*Project Director: Miriam Abrams*

*Amount of Award: \$14,890 in matching funds if \$22,335 in outside gifts are raised*

This project will organize and conduct a series of four pre-concert programs that will focus on the lives and

works of contemporary and historical women composers. These panel discussions will immediately precede the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic performances of the works discussed. Biographical and analytical articles will be published as part of the concert programs for these events. Portions of the discussions will be incorporated into KQED-FM's broadcast of the concerts. The first program will be November 14, 1987. Additional programs will be in February, March and April of 1988.

## Humanities and Contemporary Issues

### Reapportionment in California in the 1980s

*Sponsor: League of Women Voters of California, Sacramento*

*Project Directors: Ellen Elliott and Wanda Ginner*

*Amount of Award: \$10,384*

The goal of this project is to stimulate public discussion on reapportionment issues—who does it, what is the process, and what criteria are applied. The LWVC research committee, with the guidance of several scholars, will produce a Study Guide which synthesizes the ideas of the scholars. This Guide will be distributed to the seventy-five local LWV offices to use as a basis for presentations and discussions in community meetings throughout California.

### Teenage Mothers' Project

*Sponsor: The Committee on Women's Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz*

*Project Director: Helene Moglen*

*Amount of Award: \$8,000 in outright funds and \$5,811 in matching funds if \$8,716 in outside gifts are raised*

Fifteen young mothers in Watsonville will participate in writing/discussion sessions led by a master teacher and tutors from the UC Santa Cruz campus. Although the project will focus on writing skills development, it has as its central component structured discussions about identity and parenting issues as they are represented in provocative literary works and selected materials in

oral history. An anthology of work produced by the young women will be published following each of the two project cycles—in the fall of 1987 and the spring of 1988.

## Humanities in California Life

### Black Angelinos: The Afro-American in Los Angeles, 1850–1950

*Sponsor: The California Afro-American Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles*

*Project Director: Lonnie G. Bunch III*

*Amount of Award: \$7,500*

In February of 1988 the California Afro-American Museum will mount an exhibition that will chronicle the diverse and complex experience of Blacks in the Los Angeles area from 1850–1950. The exhibition will feature the use of interpretive text, multi-image presentations and selected artifacts and will examine two major themes: (1) how the lure of the California dream stimulated significant migrations of Blacks to Los Angeles; and (2) the impact of these mass movements on the current residents as well as on the migrants themselves. A public forum will be held on February 7, 1988 that will feature presentations by scholars and discussion of topics related to the exhibition. In order to reach a wider public audience with materials from this exhibition, CAAM will use this grant to present a series of slide/lectures related to the exhibition themes outside the Los Angeles area.

### Origins of a Regional Identity: The Arts in Claremont, 1930s–1940s

*Sponsor: Scripps College, Claremont*

*Project Director: Marjorie Harth Beebe*

*Amount of Award: \$2,500 in outright funds and \$2,000 in matching funds if \$3,000 in outside gifts are raised*

The two components of the proposed project, a symposium and an exhibition, will examine the importance of Claremont as a regional arts center in Southern California. The symposium, "Origins of a Regional Identity: The Arts in Claremont, 1930s–1940s," will look back at the regionalist movements in the arts during the thirties, with the development of Claremont's art community as its focus. This historical perspective will be addressed by representatives of the disciplines of art history, architecture, theater history, social history, and art criticism. The exhibition, "Art at Scripps, The Early Years," will open in January of 1988 and will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. The symposium is scheduled for January 23, 1988 at Scripps College.

## Humanities in Public Libraries

### Talking About the Vietnam War

*Sponsor: The Peninsula Library System, Belmont*

*Project Director: Susan Holmer*

*Amount of Award: \$7,500*

The Peninsula Library System will present reading and discussion groups on the American experience in the Vietnam War in two public libraries in San Mateo County. The programs will focus on five areas: the nature of the Vietnam War; the personal experience of the war; the conduct of the war; the opposition to the war; and the impact and memory of the war. The discussion groups will be led by humanities scholars with experience in teaching courses about the Vietnam War. The programs will take place about two weeks apart for two hours each beginning in October and continuing through January 1988.



Laramie Station, Wyoming. A. J. Russell; 1868.



# The Constitution: A Practical Response to Political Problems

by  
**James Kettner**

As an early American historian, and by that I mean someone whose work has been primarily in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I am inclined to see the Constitution as the product of a very particular political culture at a very particular place and time. The document, in my view, could not, in fact, have been written in exactly the same way a decade earlier. Conditions had not yet ripened. Nor, in my view, would the document have been written in precisely the same way a decade later, in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

As we observe the 200th anniversary of this document, however, I think it is very difficult for any of us to recover fully the sense that this was a new, untested, experimental framework of government, one that blended the particular historical experience of the founders with the most advanced political principles of the eighteenth century, but did so in often unexpected and controversial ways.

The fifty-five delegates who helped draft the Constitution in the sweltering confines of the Pennsylvania Statehouse during that hot and muggy summer of 1787 had lived through an extraordinarily interesting period of vital constitutional debate, debate that had, in fact, been touched off by a crisis in imperial relations with England after 1760 and had been nurtured by a very important ten years of experimentation with the process of constitution making at the state level. The central preoccupation of this generation of Americans, I think, was the question of how to construct a government that balanced power and the need for power on the one hand, with the importance of individual liberty on the other.

There are very specific historical and even ideological reasons why the framers tended to answer that question—how to reconcile power and liberty—by producing a written constitution establishing a republican form of government. Most immediately relevant was, of course, the recent experience of the controversy with England. Long accustomed to a high degree of local political autonomy under the relatively loose supervision of an imperial government that was safely three thousand miles away, Americans had developed habits of self-government, habits that now led them to oppose the claim of Parliament—a claim stated quite specifically in the Declaratory Act of 1766—that it had the right to legislate “in all cases whatsoever” over America. It had ultimate and absolute jurisdiction, limited only by its own willingness to observe custom and by its own good sense—weak protections, indeed, in the eyes of the Americans.

Legitimate government, according to the leaders of the American resistance movement, was by definition limited government. And, perhaps the most significant aspect of the controversy with England, the controversy that culminated in the War for Independence, was the effort to define in quite specific ways just what those limits ought to be. The idea of a written constitution was instituted first in the individual states. And it was in the individual states after 1776 that Americans first confronted some of the problems, both practical and theoretical, of this new kind of constitution. For example, one early question was how to distinguish what is constitutional from an ordinary act of the legislature. In fact, most of the first state constitutions had merely been drafted and then promulgated by existing legisla-



Independence Hall, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

tive bodies. However, what one legislature enacted obviously any other legislature was free to alter, repeal, or amend.

The institutional solution to this problem is quite familiar to us now, but indeed it was an innovation of this period. It first appeared in the process of drafting and establishing the Massachusetts constitution of 1780. Their idea was to have a constitutional convention, that is, a specially elected body whose sole and exclusive function was to draft a constitution which would then be submitted directly to the people or to some other popular body for their approval and ratification.

Another question was whether and how a constitution, once formed, could be changed. The contemporary constitution writers in the states did generally agree that constitutions had to be changeable. They tended to provide very special procedures for constitutional amendment, making change possible but certainly not easy. The idea was that constitutions might sometime have to be adjusted, but they should not be changed at whim. They should be adjusted only in the light of experience.

On the other hand, certain rights and liberties were considered to be so fundamental, so important, as to be beyond alteration or amendment by any procedure whatsoever. Thus, you often find in these early constitutions a Bill of Rights, which was declared to be unchangeable under any circumstances.

So the answer to the question of can a constitution change was ambiguous: Those parts of it that deal with matters of form, specific powers exercised by specific agencies, can be changed, but only by consulting the people in some special way; on the other hand, those parts of the constitution that deal with fundamental rights ought to be seen as beyond change, even by overwhelming majorities.

By and large the institutional arrangements that were established by the first state constitutions reflected a combination of political theory and colonial experience. Both history and theory taught Americans that power, particularly executive power, was dangerous. It taught them that elected assemblies, those branches of government that were closest, most responsive to people, were probably the most reliable guardians of popular liberties. Thus, most of the first state constitutions drastically reduced the powers of governors and greatly increased the powers of the legislature.

A concern for the lessons of the immediate past, especially the memory of Parliament's attempted encroachments on what were seen as Americans' liberties, also helped to shape the first approximation of a national government. Under the Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, Congress was created and given responsibility for dealing with matters of common concern, such as war and diplomacy. But with that memory of a threatening Parliament in the immediate background, the framers of the Articles denied Congress the powers to enforce its own decisions against the wishes of the states. And, of course, those of you who remember the history of this period know that the weakness of Congress and the strength of the state legislatures played into a whole series of critical problems during the 1780s—problems of commerce, problems of interstate relations, problems dealing with international relations, problems of fiscal integrity, and so forth. In fact it was in the face of these problems that many Americans came to conclude that the initial arrangements that had been made in the states and in the Articles had failed to produce that power balance between power and liberty that they had been searching for.

If too much power in the hands of royal governors or of a distant parliament had threatened to impose tyranny, they discovered that too little power at the disposal of state governors or state judiciaries, might also imperil liberty. Most ominously, a series of disputes within the individual states taught that even elected legislatures might violate individual rights if not adequately checked by other branches of government. The awareness of such problems I think was crucial for persuading those who attended the Philadelphia con-

Continued on Page 6

On May 29, 1987, a Bicentennial Convocation entitled “*The Constitution: Silence, Ambiguity and Vitality*,” was held at McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento. This Convocation was part of the 1987 Public Humanities Conference sponsored by CCH. Lynne V. Cheney, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, provided the opening address entitled “Creativity, Persistence and the American Constitution.” Her remarks were reprinted in the Summer 1987 *Network*.

The featured speakers of the Convocation were James Kettner, Professor of History, University of California, Berkeley; John T. Noonan, Jr., Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit; and Sheldon S. Wolin, Professor of Political Theory, Princeton University. Edited versions of these three speakers' presentations are included in this *Bicentennial Convocation* section.



## A Practical Response

Continued from Page 5

vention that some rebalancing of power and liberty was in order.

As a historian I tend to see the Constitution drafted in 1787 as a quite practical response to the political problems that had emerged in the 1770s and the 1780s. But I think it also reflected the principles of what my colleague, Henry May, has called the moderate enlightenment, namely that phase of eighteenth-century intellectual history which celebrated in particular the values of reason, order, balance, and moderation. The Constitution, May observed, reflected all of the virtues of the moderate enlightenment and also one of its faults—the belief that everything can be settled by compromise. Indeed, I think this intellectual predisposition toward moderation and compromise was reinforced at the Philadelphia convention by political necessity. No one, in fact, left that convention fully satisfied with every detail of the Constitution because everyone knew that without compromise between competing state interests it was virtually impossible that anything at all would have been achieved.

The most successful of these compromises was that which balanced the interest of the small states and the large states by providing for equal representation in the senate and proportional representation in the house. Surely the most tragic of the compromises, and the one that led to what was the most glaring failure of the Constitution, both as a mechanism for resolving conflict and as mechanism for protecting liberty, was that in which the Constitution implicitly recognized slavery, although it deliberately avoided using the term.

This need to compromise ensured, I think, that the document produced by the convention would be quite different from what might have been predicted on the part of any of the individual delegates at the outset of the meeting—and that includes Madison himself. Still, whatever their doubts, the thirty-nine delegates who stayed around to sign the Constitution probably shared the guarded optimism that was expressed by the aged Benjamin Franklin in my favorite of his Convention speeches given in the last session on September 17:

"I confess that I do not entirely approve of this constitution at present, but Sir, I am not I shall never approve it, for, having lived long I've experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller considerations, to change opinions even on important subjects

which I once thought right but found to be otherwise. . . . I doubt . . . whether any other convention we can obtain may be able to make a better constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does. And I think it will astonish our enemies who are waiting with confidence to hear that our councils are confounded, like those of the builder of Babel, and that our states are on the point of separation, only to meet hereafter for the purpose of cutting one another's throats. Thus, I consent, Sir, to this constitution because I expect no better and because I am sure that it is not the best."

*"I consent, Sir, to this constitution because I expect no better and because I am not sure that it is not the best."*

—Benjamin Franklin

The passage of two centuries has blurred the memory of many of the specific conflicts that helped to shape the Constitution, and it has also obscured the ways in which the document remained problematic and incomplete when it left the convention. It's easy to forget, for example, that the Constitution as it left Philadelphia lacked a Bill of Rights, arguably the most critical part of the document in the twentieth century. There were, of course, nice theoretical reasons for the initial omission of these protections. Delegates such as James Madison and James Wilson, who I consider two of the most learned, creative thinkers in the convention, both noted that Bills of Rights traditionally had defined areas in which otherwise absolute governments could not act, implying, in other words, that any right not specifically listed was fair game. The Constitution is their point of view was a radically new document. It was a document that created a government, that gave it dele-

gated powers only. And in their view, any power not specifically delegated to the government was by definition outside of its jurisdiction.

Once again, pragmatic compromise, concessions made during the course of ratification to appease the fears of the critics of the Constitutions (and there were many) led to the subsequent adoption of the first ten amendments, ratified in 1791, sacrificing that nice point of theory in a way that I think has worked for the long term benefit of the American people. In other ways as well, the Constitution passed over very important issues in silence, or dealt with them with studied ambiguity. Partly I think this reflected the fact that even within the ranks of the convention delegates there was from the beginning a plurality of original understandings about how the Constitution would work. For example, some probably never envisioned the whole process of judicial review, at least with respect to congressional laws. Other delegates certainly did conceive of this. It was thought best to leave the details vague. Partly of course this silence, this ambiguity, was the result of a conscious recognition that some issues should be left to future experience. And, partly it stemmed from the common human failure to anticipate accurately what kinds of problems the future would hold in store.

In my view, then, it was precisely because the Constitution was brief, restricted largely to general principles, susceptible from the beginning to diverse original understandings, and silent on some crucial issues that this eighteenth-century document has remained so vital. It has not always functioned successfully, of course, and one does not point only to the Civil War. One can look to the suppression of civil liberties during World War I; one can point to the internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II. One can point to a variety of administrations whose observation of the duties imposed upon them by the Constitution seemed to be based on that phrase used by an unnamed nineteenth-century politico, "well, what's a constitution among friends?" But I think the Constitution's essential flexibility, its capacity for adjustment either by formal amendment or by the subtler process of judicial interpretation, has in fact allowed each generation to confront it in the lights of its own historical experience and its own changing values. And that is why we continue to live under it.

James Kettner is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley.





# The First Amendment and Personal Belief

by  
John T. Noonan

I would like to address a portion of one particular amendment, the First Amendment, which begins, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." The First Amendment seems to me understandable only in terms of European experience. As you know, there has been a lot of debate over the original intent. The original intent has to be understood broadly against an experience where, for over thousands of years, right thinking Europeans had thought it was a good idea to persecute people who did not share your view or religion. The European experience had been that people in power, in government, would carry out religious persecution. The sixteenth century, with the division of Christendom, brought the idea of toleration among a few Protestants and a few Catholics. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the English elite had pretty well accepted the idea of toleration for Protestants. A variety of Protestants could live and even flourish, more or less, in England.

But the idea that a political community would not merely tolerate but would celebrate the free exercise of religion—that was an American idea, an idea put forward by Madison in the Virginia Commonwealth and then brought into the First Amendment. And because it was a new idea, it had to be an experimental idea. People were not sure what they were committing themselves to completely. What they were committing themselves to had to be worked out—and it is still being worked out.

The second point I would like to make is that the working out was slow, incomplete, painful, and inconsistent. A number of the states that ratified the Constitution and the amendments, had religious establishments of their own. They had state-supported Churches, publicly tax-supported indoctrination in religion. A number of states also discriminated on the basis of religion. Until 1833 someone could not hold public office in Massachusetts without taking an anti-Catholic oath. Until 1879 no Catholic and no Jew and no atheist could hold legislative office in New Hampshire. Many states practiced that kind of discrimination. And when the first major issue arose that involved the national government the national government ruthlessly persecuted the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and enforced a religious doctrine in the territories of Utah and Idaho, culminating in 1890 with an Act of Congress actually dissolving that church.

Until the 1940s, a person who held on religious grounds that he or she should not bear arms was excluded from citizenship. The American view of citizenship until the 1940s was that you could not be a citizen unless you were not a pacifist. And again in the 1940s we had the most intense religious persecution of a small sect, the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were jailed and physically attacked around the country in the middle of World War II.

The third point to understand is when the major change occurred that has affected our own experience of the First Amendment. That change occurred in the 1940s when for the first time the First Amendment provisions on religion were actually judicially enforced, first against the states and then against the national gov-



John T. Noonan, Jr. spoke on the First Amendment at the Convocation.

ernment itself. I think of three cases as landmarks: one is *Cantwell vs. Connecticut* which applied the First Amendment to the states; the second is *Barnette vs. The Board of Education*, which not only applied the First Amendment to a state but ringingly declared, in the words of Justice Jackson, that no official, high or petty, could prescribe what was orthodox in belief or in symbolic action in the United States; and the third case, *United States vs. Ballard*, where the First Amendment was applied to the federal government to draw a line as to how far the government could probe the sincerity of religious belief.

Essentially two generations have gone by since then, and the courts are still working out the problem. There is much that has not been settled and must be settled in the future. I would point to three areas, where there is much to be worked out. One area is the limit or limits of religious liberty. The Supreme Court has very rarely upheld a claim of religious liberty against the assertion of a national interest. The cases are almost trivial where the Court has defended the right of a believer to exercise his or her freedom of conscience if the national government has said that it would be upsetting to some national concern. Most particularly and most strikingly in the area of military service the national interest has been again and again preferred to any constitutional claim of religious conscience. That is an area where there is much to be done.

A second area of controversy is that of intra-church disputes. At first the Supreme Court drew a very clear and simple line that in cases of the church dividing members against members, the court would let a congregational policy prevail where there was a congregational form of church government; and if the church was hierarchically organized, it would let the hierarchy determine. The leading constitutional case was in fact one where the hierarchy in the Russian Orthodox church

was permitted to determine the fate of St. Nicholas Cathedral in New York City.

In a case decided a few years ago, *Wolf vs. Jones*, the Supreme Court abandoned those early lines and created a situation where nobody is quite sure what the rule is if a church breaks up. There is a great problem here because if you take one of the leading cases in the civil rights field, *Shelley vs. Kraemer*, whenever a court enforces a trust or contract you have state action which, if it's state action affecting racial discrimination, is unconstitutional. The logic of *Shelley vs. Kraemer* would say that in intra-church disputes whenever you have a court decree enforcing a particular religious rule, you have a judicial establishment of religion which is unconstitutional. But if the courts are incompetent to intervene in schisms and disputes within churches, the alternative seems to be a physical free-for-all. So there is a terrible tension, and very real problem here. The evidence of that is the dozens of cases that have now been litigated around the country where various denominations, principally Protestant, have divided on social issues and the result has been quite uncertain as to who will end up with the church property.

A third area, again symbolic and again only by way of example, is the meaning of religion itself. Certainly the Founding Fathers would not have disagreed that religion involved worship of God, but in the *Torcaso* case, in which the First Amendment was applied by the Supreme Court to uphold the right in conscience of an atheist not to take an oath requiring a belief in God, Justice Black said that a religion could exist without a belief in God. He introduced into American jurisprudence the term "secular humanism" as an instance of a religion. Since then, as you know, the question of whether secular humanism is a religion has proved a vexing one. Once you say that religion does not require a belief in God, what you are looking for is some kind of comprehensive life scheme, conscientiously embraced, some total system of values. There are serious questions as to what does or does not qualify as a religion. The Founders did not provide a definition of religion in the Constitution. It has been left to our experience to work out the meaning.

I began by saying that I would talk about church and state. And yet those two words are profoundly misleading. We do not have a state in the way that the Europeans have a state, a prince with a fairly unitary dominion. We have federal and state and municipal governments. We have multiple ways in which power impacts upon individuals. And we do not have a church either, the way the Europeans had nations organized around churches. We have hundreds and hundreds of religions, and citizens with all kinds of religious experiences and beliefs. The phrase "church and state" sets up a false dichotomy. What we have are persons. In those persons there are religious beliefs and nonreligious beliefs, and there is in them an ability to exercise power in some way or other—as citizens in a voting booth or as holders of particular offices. The problem as one works out the First Amendment is to see that we do not have two mighty entities opposing each other. We have hundreds of millions of persons who share power and also share some form of conscientious belief. The relationships are worked out within the persons.

*John Noonan is Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.*



# A Conception of Citizenship

by  
Sheldon S. Wolin

The Constitution mentions the citizen a lot but never defines that creature, nor, interestingly enough, do *The Federalist Papers* themselves. So we have to interpret a bit, and we will do it by way of questions. What did the new kind of power created at Philadelphia need from the citizen? What kind of citizen would that constitution by its exercise of power help to create?

Because the Constitution proposed to create a centered system of power, a national government, it had to create a new type of citizen, one who would accept the more attenuated relationship with power implied by voting and election. Voting and elections would serve as the main link between citizens and those in power. At the same time, if the attenuated relationship were to succeed in conveying enthusiasm as well as material support to the center, it needed a citizen who could identify himself with a power that was remote, abstract, and so distant that for the most part it would operate unseen. In other words, because the new project involved establishing a form of power that bore certain unfortunate resemblances to the kind of power which the colonists had rejected less than two decades earlier when they had rebelled against the arbitrary authority of the British Crown and Parliament, the Constitution had to reject, in fact, the idea of the citizen which the colonists had themselves assumed when they had defended local, participatory politics of the colonies against the distant authority of the British Crown and Parliament.

These earlier controversies left Americans with a conception of citizenship divided within itself, and, for that reason, unable to evolve in ways, I think, that would meet the challenge of modern power. The constitutional system encouraged a politics of interest groups and a citizen who by proxy would permit his private interests to be represented by the activity of particular pressure groups. The civic self designed by the Constitution was, I would suggest, not a design of citizenship but a design for a legitimation process. Further, it was, as *The Federalist Papers* made clear, a political structure whose purpose was to elevate the presidency as the center of a centralized system, and by the same token, demote the legislature. The implicit task set by that presidential form was to develop a citizenry that would look at the president in a new and depoliticized way as a monarch above politics, as a father figure, as an easily accessible symbol of unity as contrasted with the diversity, even the near anarchy of Congress itself.

In short, a citizenry was conceived in terms which allowed the American political animal to evolve into a domesticated animal. But the Constitution also had to contend with a rival form of civic life and a rival conception of the citizen. For there existed in the colonies at that time a flourishing political life which did not depend upon the Constitution, but which preceded it. The political life forms of state and local governments and of the voluntary and spontaneous associations of citizens presented a sharp contrast to the formalistic and abstract politics centering around the national government. It was a different kind of politics—immediate, direct, continuous. It was a politics of experience based upon substance rather than as it has increasingly become, politics based upon image. Thus, the actual politics of the country was, as it were, larger than the constitutional definition of it.

The actuality of American life, then as well as now, is that American politics in all of its ramifications, re-



Silhouette of James Madison by Joseph Sansom. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

quires a multiple civic self, one who is required to act as a citizen in very diverse settings—national, state, city, town, neighborhood and voluntary association. It is, perhaps, the most complex conception of citizenship ever devised. And yet we have no coherent conception of it. Instead we have assumed that the issue could be defined in terms of a simple confrontation between two opposing conceptions—the representative government's conception of the citizen as an occasional participant through the simple act of voting, and, on the other hand, the democratic conception which conceives citizenship as direct participation in self-government.

These notions are inadequate, but they are inadequate in different ways. The first model, the representative one, is the most dangerous because it wants the citizen, fundamentally, to be a loyal subject. That is, provide a stable base of support and legitimacy so that those in power can undistractedly concentrate upon exercising power in a dangerous, complex and changing world. If it did not need the legitimacy of the citizen and that supplied by elections, it would quite happily, perhaps, dispense with the whole business of electoral politics. It is, at the same time, clearly impossible to impose a democratic conception of the citizen upon the political realities of the megastate. But if the politics of the megastate is to be even minimally democratized it will require a citizen who fulfills his or her civic role by doing something other than passively supporting those in authority. Participation in megastate power is difficult. It demands a critical, thoughtful citizen who can participate in the form in which megapolitics presents itself. It is abstract politics, remote, often technical in character. It demands a citizen, then, who can participate thoughtfully, as well as passionately, in the controversies that surround the megastate, controversies such as nuclear weapons, ecological problems, the actions of political and public people, foreign policy, and much else.

The task, then, of the citizen is to insist upon a widened debate in those vital matters and to reclaim public space as a space for deliberation, criticism and alternatives, and to prevent the important matters of politics from becoming continuously and consistently depoliticized and turned into in-house discussions.

*Sheldon Wolin is Professor of Political Theory at Princeton University and Clark Library Professor at UCLA.*

## UCLA Hosts Symposium on Constitution

A two-day symposium on "Constitutionalism and the Social Imagination" will be held in the Humanities Conference Room of the James E. West Alumni Center on the UCLA campus. There is no charge for attending the symposium. Registration begins at 8am on Friday, November 6. The program includes presentations by several distinguished scholars: Sheldon Wolin on "Montesquieu and the American Founders of the Constitution," Richard Ashcraft on "The Decline and Fall of Early Republican Concepts of the Constitution," Hendrik Hartog on "Law and the Conditions of Freedom in the Nineteenth-Century Family," Duncan Kennedy on "Constitutionalism as a Randomizing Factor in American Political Life: Notes of an Atheist," Ellen Dubois on "The Past and Future of Women's Rights in the Constitution," Clayborn Carson on "Racial Movements and Constitutional Reform," Lynn Hunt on "Constituting and Representing in America and France," and Gerald Graff on "Interpretive Relativism in Constitutional and Literary Theory: Political Subversion or Fictional Illusions?" Each presentation will be followed by a discussion period. The symposium ends on Saturday at 6pm; there is a Sunday brunch scheduled for all interested participants. For further information about the symposium, contact Prof. Robert Maniquis at 213/825-4285.

## Peninsula Library System Starts "Talking About the Vietnam War"

Beginning in November, reading and discussion groups on the American experience in the Vietnam War will begin in two public libraries in San Mateo County. The six programs of the series are scheduled two weeks apart at both the Menlo Park Library and the Pacifica Library. (See the Calendar on page 11 for exact dates for each location.) Humanities scholars will lead the discussions, and all participants will be given a reading list prior to the meetings to allow them to read and reflect upon the materials.

In addition to the reading list, participants will be given a chronology of events leading to the war, major events within the war and following the war; and a supplemental bibliography of articles and books for those who want to do additional reading.

For more information about these library programs, please contact Pat Lanyi at the Menlo Park Library (415/858-3460) or Elizabeth Sor at Pacifica Library (415/355-5196).

## Sonoma County Library Sponsors "Generations" Series

Attention! all Sonoma County residents interested in learning about 19th century local utopian experiments, 20th century issues relating to local art, architecture, and literature, or timeless questions relating to family life and ethnic roles in the community. The Sonoma County Library is presenting a series of programs based on the theme of "Sonoma County Generations"—Utopian Generations, Artistic Generations, Literary Generations, and Familial Generations. The programs feature two-hour discussions with local scholars, journalists, artists, and writers; they take place at different branches of the Sonoma County Library. For more information about the November schedule, contact Bo Simons at the Santa Rosa Library, 707/545-0831.



## Ecofeminism: Weaving The Worlds Together

by

Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein

*Editor's Note: A three-day conference, "Ecofeminist Perspectives: Culture, Nature, and Theory," was held at the University of Southern California, March 27-29, 1987. The following description of the subject and the conference itself was offered by the project directors.*

The argument that women are subordinate to men and that this condition is changeable is a central tenet of contemporary feminism. How this subordination came to be and how it might be changed has been a subject of intense scholarly and popular debate for the last fifteen years. During this same period the question of how environmental destruction might be prevented has also been a subject of considerable debate. In the midst of all these debates women have taken an increasingly prominent role in different political efforts to save the earth.

The expression "Eco-feminism" was coined in 1974 by the French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne. She argued that the fate of the human species and the planet was at stake and that women were in a privileged position to bring about the ecological revolution because no other human group was so directly concerned at all levels in the sustenance of life. For d'Eaubonne ecological consciousness was intrinsic to feminism: the feminist transformation of patriarchal power relations would strike at the root of a more general manipulative attitude toward the world—an attitude that had created a situation in which all planetary life was in jeopardy.

In this fear, she was not unique.

Rachel Carson's 1962 text *The Silent Spring* unleashed a powerful environmental movement that culminated in the nationwide Earth Day of 1970, but the notion that the collective voices of women should be central to the greening of the earth did not blossom until the late 1970s. Feminism would first have to establish itself as an autonomous movement and press the claim that women had the right to be full and equal participants in the making of culture. In this process writers and scholars documented the historical association between women and nature, insisting that women would not be free until the connections between women and the natural world were severed.

But today many women have second thoughts about their rejection of the natural world. Within the academy, feminist theorists began to entertain the proposition that the cultural devaluation of natural processes was a product of male consciousness which devalued women's experiences generally. Outside the academy, women created poetry, rituals, and social movements which connected the devastation of the earth with the exploitation of women. Many were inspired by the myths and symbols of ancient Goddess cultures, while others were drawn to the symbols and practices of Native American cultures.

Our purpose in planning this conference was to open up dialogues among a number of diverse communities who deal with problems of ecological balance, gender equality, and planetary survival in the contemporary world. The conference attracted a diverse audience which included academics, political activists, writers, students, and concerned citizens who were drawn to the conference because of the ecological crisis facing us all. Approximately three quarters of the four hundred



Ynestra King from the Woman Earth Feminist Peace Institute participated in the "Ecofeminist Perspectives" conference at USC.

person audience was female, and about seven percent was composed of racial minorities.

The opening evening, "Issues and Visions," featured talks by Charlene Spretnak, Susan Griffin and Paula Gunn Allen. Green activist Spretnak described the different paths of environmental activism and goddess spirituality that led to ecofeminism. Griffin, author of one of the central texts of the movement, *Women and Nature*, followed with a humorous yet scathing assault on the web of militarism and brutality. Gunn Allen, author of *The Sacred Hoop* and a professor of Native American Studies at UC Berkeley, closed the evening with a poetic discussion of the wisdom which indigenous peoples bring to questions of earth stewardship and spirituality.

The rest of the conference continued with these themes in plenaries, workshops, and performance and ritual. While organized to fit a paradigm of "academic" conferences with papers and responses, the abundance of song, poetry and laughter clearly indicated something different was happening. Most strikingly the intensity of the ideological fervor many activists brought never led to the acrimony which often characterizes intellectual/political gatherings. People listened to each other and they also expressed their disagreements, but differences were infused with a spirit of trust and respect. The heart and head were always present.

Speaking to the importance of defending the indigenous peoples of the world and learning from their values was one of the foreign guests, Ellen Marit Gaup-Dunfjeld a Shaman from Samiland (Lapland). The daughter of the Great Shaman of Samiland (the land north of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia), Ellen Marit is the oldest of nine children and only one to have the gift for psychic healing. Eventually she will replace her father as the spiritual and political leader of the Sami people. At the conference she spoke about Psychic Healing as practiced by Sami Shamans and also about the destruction of Samiland's reindeer grazing lands by the nuclear fallout from Chernobyl.

The closing panel with Brian Swimme, Rachel Bagby and Ynestra King had elements of theater, gospel, and politics woven together in an exuberant blend. Coming after a talk on re-invoking the grove by poet Deena Metzger and preceding the closing ritual, this formal plenary epitomized the variety of elements within the ecofeminist constellation.

Perhaps the most tricky problem, raised at different points throughout the weekend, was how we in "post-modern" culture could learn from the wisdom of indigenous peoples. The proponents of synthesizing the

best from modern technology with older customs did not find a meeting point with those arguing that modern technology in all its forms degraded ecological communities. Other debates centered on whether goddess imagery was an essential part of ecological consciousness and on the sacred cow of the ecology movement, the thesis of global overpopulation. The workshop on reproductive technologies and the population question was so intense that several persons suggested the next conference be devoted to ecofeminism and the population issue. The hope is that this may take place within two years.

### Basket

Hours of meticulous work  
in creating you, basket

Design

Beauty

Form

My nimble fingers are getting old  
as every straw is formed  
to your perfect semi-spherical being

Carefully

Slowly

I can feel the spirit in you  
Trying to escape

—Gina Zyung  
Skyline

## Oakland Discovers Poets in the Schools

In 1986 a book of student poems and writing exercises entitled *It Begins with Me* was published by the California Heritage Poetry Curriculum. This book represents the results of a two-year program in the Oakland Unified School District in which scholars and poets worked together in selected high school and junior high school classes to help students focus their attention on the fundamental questions raised by the Humanities: what does it mean to be human, and what is the community within which we form our individual values.

In her introduction to the volume, Edna Washington, Deputy Superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District, congratulates the student-poets "who have brought their minds and imaginations to bear upon the materials of the Humanities, transforming information, introspection and experience into poetry that speaks eloquently out of their young lives."

We are pleased to share with *Network* readers some of the poems written by these Oakland students.

### How I Feel (negative)

Sometimes I feel like a rotten egg or  
a pencil without any lead

Sometimes I feel like soil without any  
seeds or  
a french braid without any beads

Sometimes I feel like a church without  
people or  
a temple without a steeple

Sometimes I feel like a rusted ol' can or  
a broken-down fan

Sometimes I feel like a book with a  
missing page or  
a live performance without a stage

—Karla Robinson  
Bret Harte



### CCH Receives Grant for Scholars in the Schools Program

CCH has been awarded a four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the nationwide dissemination of the *Scholars in the Schools* (SIS) program. The grant, in the amount of \$52,000 for the first year, will support the installation of this CCH-developed program in a discrete number of sites nationwide. Since 1978, CCH has sponsored SIS projects in twelve districts at twenty-six different sites in California. With the receipt of this grant the program can now be installed in three or four additional sites during each of the four years. The sites will be selected with careful attention paid to the geographic location and demographic factors of potential adopters.

The SIS program as developed by CCH places university humanities scholars in secondary schools for three-year residencies. There they use their disciplinary training to add to or enhance humanities units in the curriculum, to assist teacher preparation of classroom materials, and to stimulate student interest in the humanities by arranging field trips to museums, libraries, historical societies and other cultural institutions, and by presenting special programs that bring together university, schools, and community.

The current SIS project will be directed by Dr. Ann Pescatello who developed and directed the eight-year program for CCH. Consultants for the project will include former scholars in the schools and teachers who have been part of the California program. For information about the SIS program, please contact Dr. Pescatello at Center for South & Southeast Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 94720 (415) 337-2460.

### Federation of State Humanities Councils Receives Grant for Humanities Satellite Project

The Division of General Programs at the National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded \$39,642 to the Federation of State Humanities Councils for initial planning of a major humanities film series to be aired on public television stations throughout the country. The thirteen-part programs, entitled "American Images," will explore American history and culture through films and videos that examine individual lives, regional and local cultures, and attitudes toward the environment and the land. All films to be included in the series were funded by NEH or state humanities councils.

The NEH grant will support pre-production review and scripting of programs for the first series, "Life Stories," a collection of film biographies of historical and contemporary Americans. By examining the lives of poets, civil rights leaders, artists, political figures and others, the series will illuminate the deeply rooted strengths and contradictory impulses that inform the American character.

Later series will look at the variety of religious, ethnic and regional cultures that make up the fabric of American life and at the implications of American attitudes toward the land and the environment. The series as a whole is designed to introduce a broad audience to a rich resource in humanities films and to increase public understanding of the nature of the humanities.

Production on the biography series is expected to begin in fall 1988. In spring 1988 funds will be sought from foundations to support planning of the second and third series.

### UC Establishes Humanities Institute

The University of California is setting up a major program aimed at enhancing research and graduate education in the humanities. A Humanities Research Institute will be established on the Irvine campus as part of a \$3.5 million initiative, the most comprehensive of its type in the country. The Institute will support a group of scholars-in-residence who will study humanistic themes, conduct workshops, seminars, and conferences and publish proceedings.

President David Gardner described the institute as "a unique opportunity to create an internationally distinguished center for scholarly work in the humanities, a magnet for the world's leading humanists to come and learn from one another and to advance our understanding and appreciation of the humanities." He hoped it would also encourage "the nation's brightest and most promising young people to commit themselves to the humanities as their life's work."

In addition to the Institute at the Irvine campus, the initiative will support research units in the humanities on the eight UC campuses, faculty research fellowships, and predoctoral humanities fellowships.

#### CCH Director Addresses UC Regents

CCH Executive Director, Jim Quay, addressed the September meeting of the UC Regents where the humanities initiative was unveiled. On behalf of the CCH, he applauded the initiative and spoke about the importance of establishing a "Learning Society," echoing Dr. Gardner's remarks from *A Nation at Risk*: "At the heart of the Learning Society are educational opportunities extending into adulthood and far beyond the traditional institutions of learning, our schools and colleges. They extend into homes and workplaces, into libraries, art galleries, museums, and science centers; indeed, into every place where the individual can develop and mature in work and life."

Quay noted that this statement was at the heart of the CCH mission which is to promote the humanities to all Californians. He exhorted the University to help create this Learning Society by encouraging its distinguished humanities faculty to find occasions to share its talents with the general public. "CCH looks forward," he stated, "to cooperating with the University's scholars and administrators to create new ways to bring the insights of the humanities to all Californians."

### Oral History Directory Available

The Southwest Oral History Association has announced the publication of *Oral History Collections in the Southwest Region: A Directory and Subject Guide*. The 266-page directory contains information about collections of oral history interviews in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Southern California. The directory may be purchased for \$14.95 including postage from: SOHA Directory and Database Project, c/o Oral History Program, 136 Powell Library, UCLA, Los Angeles 90024. (CA purchasers add \$.84 sales tax.) This project was funded in part by a grant from CCH.

### NEH Summer Seminars for Teachers

The Division of Fellowships and Seminars of NEH is sponsoring fifty-three seminars on a variety of texts in the humanities for 4-6 weeks during the summer of 1988. Teachers selected to participate in the program will receive a stipend of \$2,000-\$2,750, depending on the length of the seminar. The stipend is intended to cover travel, books and living expenses for the duration of the seminar.

The deadline for application is *March 1, 1988*. Participants from the 1986 and 1987 seminars are not eligible to apply. Program guidelines will be available from NEH in mid-November and can be obtained by writing: NEH, Division of Fellowships and Seminars, Room 316-SSST-SC, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506. 202/786-0463

### NEH Chairman Issues Report on the Humanities in Schools

*American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools* is a Congressionally mandated report authored by NEH Chairman, Lynne Cheney, on the state of humanities education in American public schools. In the report, which was released in early September, Cheney concludes that history and literature are not being adequately taught in public schools. This is, in part, she says, because our education system stresses *skills* rather than *knowledge*. "We teach our children *how* to think without troubling them to learn anything worth thinking about (and) we teach them *how* to understand the world in which they live without conveying to them the events and ideas that have brought it into existence." Cheney urges that a proper balance between skills and knowledge be restored and that changes be made in textbook selection and teacher training and professional development programs. Restoring the humanities to their proper place in America's schools, she argues, will help students acquire familiarity with the past that they will find useful in their lives.

Single copies of *American Memory* are available from the Office of Publications and Public Affairs, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506.

### NEH Announces Plans for Research Center

NEH has announced plans to establish a research center to study the way history is taught and learned in our nation's schools. NEH is inviting applications from educational institutions and other eligible organizations to set up a new center that will collect and analyze information on history instruction in grades K-12. The center will receive up to \$500,000 per year from NEH for three years.

This announcement follows the publication of Cheney's report *American Memory*, which says that history and literature are not being adequately taught. According to Cheney, "This new history research center will help us to further understand why this is happening and to discover ways to make improvements."

Interested applicants should contact NEH, Office of Planning and Budget, Room 403, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506. (202) 786-0428. The deadline for applications is December 8, 1987.

### Council for Basic Education Offers Teacher Fellowships

Teachers in the humanities are invited to apply for summertime fellowships to support six weeks of scholarly independent study. The national fellowship competition sponsored by the Council for Basic Education (CBE) provides up to 150 awards to outstanding grade 9-12 teachers. Deadline for application is *December 1, 1987*. Awards are announced in April of 1988. The fellow's stipend is \$2800; an additional \$200 is given to the fellow's school for the purchase of library books to be selected by the fellow. Applications are available from CBE, c/o Independent Study in the Humanities, Dept. 36, CN6331, Princeton, NJ 08541-6331.



# CALENDAR OF HUMANITIES EVENTS

## Exhibits

through  
December

"Heaven Preserve Us People: The History of the Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region" continues through December at the Student Center at Hartnell College, 156 Homestead Ave., Salinas. 408/429-3773

through  
January 3

"A. J. Russell and the Making of Modern America: An Exhibition" at the Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak St. 415/273-3842. (Museum closed on Mondays and Tuesdays)

## Radio

through  
November 26

"Bill of Rights Radio Education Project," a radio documentary series on the history and current status of Constitutional issues. Four programs broadcast each Tuesday and Thursday in November. For information on the series, contact Karen Ishizuka at 213/931-1625.

## Events

November 1

"Norman Rockwell's America: Myth or Reality?" a theatre production and lecture/discussion series is at Hartnell College Outreach Center, King City. 2:00 pm 408/755-6700

November 2

"The Nature of the War," a discussion program on the Vietnam War at the Menlo Park Library. 7-9pm Contact Pat Lanyi at 415/858-3460.

November 4

"Utopian Generations: Round Barns, Progressive Poultry, and Hippies in the Hills," a lecture/discussion led by Gayle LeBaron and Dan Markwyn. Guerneville Regional Library, 14107 Armstrong Woods Rd. 7:00-9:00pm 707/545-0831

November 5

"Artistic Generations: Public Art," a lecture/discussion led by Mary Fuller. Santa Rosa Central Library, Third and E Streets. 7:00-9:00pm 707/545-0831

November 6 & 7

"Constitutionalism and the Social Imagination," a two-day conference sponsored by UCLA. Registration (no charge) starts at 8am in the Humanities Conference Room, James E. West Alumni Center and Faculty Center. 213/825-4285 (see Project News for list of speakers)

November 7

"Familial Generations: The Petaluma Area," a lecture/discussion led by James Heig. Petaluma Regional Library, 100 Fairgrounds Dr. 2:00-4:00pm 707/545-0831

November 7

"Norman Rockwell" is at the Placerville Center, Placerville. 8pm 916/622-9165

November 8

Screening of "Carved in Silence" a film by Felicia Lowe at the Film Arts Foundation Film Festival, Roxie Cinema, 3117 16th St., San Francisco. 6 pm.

November 12

"Separation of Powers: The Imperial Presidency or the Deadlock of Democracy?" second in a series of six debates sponsored by Glendale Community College. 7:00-9:30pm at the Glendale Community College Campus Center. 818/240-1000 or 818/846-0612

November 12

"The Nature of the War," discussion at Pacifica Library. 7-9pm Contact Elizabeth Sor at 415/355-5196.

November 14

"A Forgotten Treasure," the first U.S. performance of *Creneaux* by Jacqueline Fontyn. Bay Area Women's Philharmonic at the First Congregational Church, Post and Mason Streets, San Francisco. 8pm 415/626-4888

November 16

"The Nature of the War," second part of the discussion series on the Vietnam War at Menlo Park Library. 7-9pm 415/858-3460

November 21

"The Octopus and the Iron Horse: Image and Symbolism of the American Railroad," an all-day symposium at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. For information call the Oakland Museum 415/273-3842.

November 30

"The Experience of the War," third part in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at Menlo Park Library. 7-9pm 415/858-3460

December 3

"The Nature of the War," second part in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at Pacifica Library. 7-9pm 415/355-5196

December 5

"Norman Rockwell" at the College of the Redwoods, Eureka. 8pm 707/443-8411

December 12

"The Bill of Rights: Is the Bill of Rights Tail Wagging the Constitutional Dog?" third in a series of six debates sponsored by Glendale Community College. 7:00-9:30pm at the Glendale Community College Campus Center. 818/240-1000 or 818/846-0612

December 12 & 13

"Norman Rockwell" at the Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara. 8pm on December 12; 2pm on December 13. 805/965-0581

December 14

"The Conduct of the War," fourth part in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at Menlo Park Library. 7-9pm 415/858-3460

January 7

"The Experience of the War," third part in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at the Pacifica Library. 7-9pm 415/355-5196

January 11

"The Opposition to the War," fifth part in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at Menlo Park Library. 7-9pm 415/858-3460

January 21

"The Conduct of the War," fourth part in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at the Pacifica Library. 7-9pm 415/355-5196

January 22 & 23

"Norman Rockwell" at Chabot College, Valley Campus. 8pm both evenings. 415/786-6981

January 23

"Origins of a Regional Identity: The Arts in Claremont, 1930s-1940s," a symposium in conjunction with the exhibit, "Art at Scripps, The Early Years," at Scripps College Humanities Auditorium, Claremont. 10:30am to 4:00pm 714/621-8000

January 25

"The Impact and Memory of the War," last in the discussion series on the Vietnam War at the Menlo Park Library. 7-9pm 415/858-3460

January 29

"Evolution of Black American Religious Music: History, Functions, and Societal Influence," symposium at the California Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles. 213/734-5379

### New Address for Los Angeles CCH Office

The Los Angeles CCH office has moved. Please note the new address and telephone number:  
315 West Ninth Street, Suite 1103  
Los Angeles, CA 90015  
213/623-5993



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## NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: April 1, 1988

Proposals for this deadline must conform to the 1988 Program Announcement. Send 10 copies of all proposals (14 copies of media proposals) to the San Francisco office by the due date.

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## OAKLAND MUSEUM EXHIBIT FEATURES THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF A. J. RUSSELL



*Temporary and Permanent Bridges Over Green River [Wyoming]. Citadel Rock in Distance.*

Andrew J. Russell (1829–1902) photographed two events that profoundly shaped America—the Civil War and the building of the transcontinental railroad. Many of his original glass plate negatives and albumen prints are owned by The Oakland Museum, where they will be on view October 10 through January 3, 1988 in an exhibition entitled “The Nation at War, The Nation at Work: Andrew J. Russell’s Photographs of the Civil War and the Transcontinental Railroad.”

The exhibition includes photographs, paintings done by Russell before he turned to photography, personal memorabilia, and artifacts. Guest curator Susan Williams, one of very few Russell scholars in the country, organized the exhibition. The installation is designed by Heather Huxley.

Following the Civil War, many soldiers and officers from both armies came West as laborers and overseers on the construction of the transcontinental railroad. “This was the final realization of America’s manifest destiny—the joining of the nation from shore to shore,” said L. Thomas Frye, Chief Curator of History. “Russell had recorded during the Civil War the amazing power of this new 19th century technology, of construction and destruction. Now he was able to record this great

power used for peaceful purposes. If the Civil War was a disunion of the nation, the transcontinental railroad was its symbolic reunion.” Russell’s photograph of the meeting of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1969, became a symbol of American westward expansion and 19th century industrial progress.

Two symposia are planned in conjunction with the exhibition. “Working on the Railroad: The Life and Times of America’s Railway Workers” was held Saturday, October 17 at The Oakland Museum. “The Octopus and the Iron Horse: Image and Symbolism of the American Railroad” will take place Saturday, November 21 at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. This symposium will explore the impact of the railroad on the American imagination. What has been the role of the railroad in American popular culture—art, music, and photographs—and how has that image changed from Russell’s time to our own?

For more information about the symposia, contact the History Department at 415/273-3842. The Oakland Museum is located at 10th and Oak Streets in downtown Oakland.